

**Minutes of the Meeting  
February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1998**

Projects Reviewed

Convened: 8:00 am

Queen Anne Standpipe (Subcommittee)  
1013 East Pike Street Use Permit (Subcommittee)  
Sign Ordinance Briefing  
Mercer Complex  
Mercer Theater District Master Plan  
Seattle Center Hotel Proposal

Adjourned: 4:00pm

Commissioners Present

Barbara Swift, Chair  
Moe Batra  
Carolyn Darwish  
Gail Dubrow  
Robert Foley  
Gerald Hansmire  
Rick Sundberg

Staff Present

Marcia Wagoner  
Peter Aylsworth  
Rebecca Walls

011598.1A    Project: **Queen Anne Standpipe**  
                   Phase: Subcommittee (Swift, Batra, Dubrow, & Sundberg)  
                   Presenters: Aziz Alfi, Seattle Public Utilities  
                               Eugene Mantchev, Seattle Public Utilities  
                               Laurel Harrington, Seattle Public Utilities  
                   Time: 1 hr. (0.3%)

The design team has received comments from the Design Commission, the Arts Commission, and has held a community meeting in the Queen Anne neighborhood. As a result of these comments the design team presented the rationale for a new water standpipe. The new tank will replace two tanks, approximately 60 and 90 years old, that are currently inadequate in capacity, are unsafe for the operations crews, and are unreliable in seismic events. The overall proposed tank capacity has been increased because of the fire fighting and storage requirements of a neighborhood population that has grown dramatically since the original tanks were constructed. The new tank will have a reduced overall diameter compared to the sum of the two existing tank diameters, and will have an opportunity for a new appearance and new landscaping. Urban compatibility issues can be addressed by either covering the tank with a mural painting, by hiding the tank with landscaping, or by rebuilding two new, smaller tanks that won't have the necessary volume capacity. A similar project was completed in West Seattle and the City has received positive comments from neighbors about the service improvements and the graphic design of the new tank. The design team plans to hold additional community meetings in the future and to work with designers in evaluating the options of landscaping and surface treatments. The long-term objective is a facility that meets current water demands, is safe, and has an acceptable community fit.

The tank's increased volume is based on its three main storage areas, operating, fire, and stand-by, and their required capacities.

Operating	requires 10-20% of peak demand = .4 million gallons
Fire	estimated w/ a fire duration of 5 hrs. x 5,000 gal/min. =1.5 million gallons
Stand-by	reserved for an unforeseen event, required to be equal to average daily demand of 2.0 million gallons.

These criteria result in a conservative required capacity of 3.9 million gallons. The design team is trying to combine the fire and stand-by sections and to reduce the overall required capacity to 2.2 million gallons, which is all that the site can accommodate.

#### **Discussion:**

- Batra:** Have you had any public comments on the project?  
**Alfi:** We had a public meeting in 1993.  
**Dubrow:** So there has been no community involvement for five years.  
**Batra:** Has the enlarged capacity tank been identified in the Health Department's Comprehensive Water Quality Plan?  
**Mantchev:** No. The 1993 plan wasn't that detailed.  
**Alfi:** We submit all our projects that will come in contact with drinking water to the Health Department for approval.  
**Harrington:** We have many mural designs that have been developed for other tanks around Seattle. One possible mural design would give the appearance of columns and arches, similar to the existing tank, but there would be no actual columns

protruding from the surface. The tank cannot have actual columns due to the concern that people will climb on them.

**Walls:** Have you had problems with people climbing on the tank?.

**Harrington:** There is an existing fence around the tanks now.

**Dubrow:** Referring back to the Commission's past action, approval was granted for the replacement of the two tanks with a single, double capacity tank. I still have three major concerns that have not been addressed. I want to see design alternatives that offer a better urban fit into the neighborhood. I am concerned that the community participation done before construction of the project will not have an effect on the form...

**Alfi:** We have had a community meeting and are planning a future meeting.

**Dubrow:** ...Yes, but it was five years ago. My other concerns are that the design analysis, while efficiently organized in plan, hasn't been adequately developed in three dimensions. It's an issue of how the tanks fit into the urban fabric. My third concern is that we have never seen any design alternatives, such as partial burial of the tank. Having seen only one design, I have to wonder if this is the only alternative.

**Alfi:** It was my understanding that planning engineers had explored alternatives prior to developing this design. The last Commission gave us approval to go ahead with this design after seeing the same pictures that we have shown you. The prior approval suggested landscaping to improve the site and to help with scale issues. We have since hired a landscape architect and will provide new landscaping to the site.

**Walls:** I have to clarify that the previous Commission gave approval of the project in the briefing phase. That does not mean that the project is approved completely. It must be approved at each stage of project development, briefing, schematics, and design development. The Commission also recommended that a landscape architect be included on the design team to produce a comprehensive landscape plan for the site...

**Alfi:** We have done that.

**Walls:** ...The 1993 action also emphasized the importance of treating the new tank like an asset, which requires care in dealing with the siting, scale, and detail of the tank. This does not have to do with the landscaping, but with the actual tank.

**Alfi:** There are basic laws of nature and geometry in sizing the tank. If you have to supply a certain volume in a given space, there aren't many options. I can't make water shrink. I think that we have responded to all these questions. In terms of the fit, we have no room to maneuver the tank into a different place. Expanding the site by taking over adjacent lots is not an option we want to consider.

**Walls:** I don't think that is what the Commission is asking for.

**Sundberg:** I am frustrated with...

**Alfi:** We have to deal with the space available.

**Sundberg:** ...If I could comment; I am frustrated with the size and proportion issues being addressed only with superficial surface treatment. You are asking an artist to save the project and to make it visually acceptable. The tank could be more slender, even taller. It is a squatty thing now. Why can't a back-up emergency pumping system be put in allowing the tank to be partially buried? Putting money aside, why can't these options be pursued...

**Alfi:** Money is not aside.

**Sundberg:** ...Please let me finish. You are technically stuck with a method of construction. I am not bothered by the modern construction, but it must be well sited and

designed; a design that doesn't require an artist to save it. The current proportions are not attractive.

**Wagoner:** To expand on what Rebecca said; the project was presented in a briefing in 1993. An action of approval is required at each phase of the project. The past approval provided for consolidation of the two tanks into a single new tank. Proportion, scale, and detail were noted concerns to be dealt with.

**Mantchev:** That is not correct. I was at that meeting and you are misinterpreting the minutes. The project was going to construction in 1994. The Commission discussed the size of the tank and acknowledged that it was a necessary evil.

**Wagoner:** Despite when the project was set for construction, it still requires approval at each phase of design.

**Mantchev:** It was made clear that we were going with less than was needed or required.

**Dubrow:** We can agree to disagree. Today we have significant concerns about the design. I have concerns about your offices capacity to design in regards to urban issues of scale and fit. It is the Commission's job to ensure that functional requirements are combined with quality design in public projects. I had hoped you would come today with some design alternatives.

**Harrington:** Eugene was involved in an analysis of burying the tank. One problem with relying on back-up pumps is that after an earthquake, pumps typically don't work. This greatly effects the Fire Department's ability to function. Gravity flow is the most reliable. The engineers have fought to keep the storage above grade.

**Mantchev:** Burying the tank is possible, but is extremely expensive and would take much longer to construct. The setbacks required for excavation are also not available. The tank relies on a thick steel plate at the base. The UBC has high earthquake requirements, and the tank will not work without the plate.

**Sundberg:** I am not ready to approve the project.

**Batra:** I am convinced of the need for increased capacity. I am also frustrated that the project is not identified in the Water Quality Comprehensive Plan.

**Swift:** It is my sense that there are still a lot of concerns about the project.

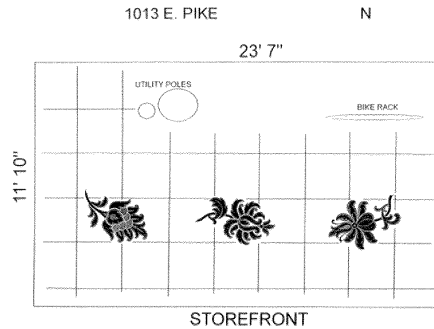
**Hansmire:** The project needs further development of proportions and scale. Queen Anne is doing a Comprehensive Plan currently. It is essential that this project be presented to them before further action takes place. It would be easier to support the project if it had undergone recent community review and discussion.

**Action:** **The Commission does not recommend approval of the current design as presented and continues to have concerns about the tank's proportions, scale, and urban fit. The Commission recommends that the project be presented to the Queen Anne neighborhood planning committee immediately.**

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021998.2      Project: **1013 East Pike Street** (Street Use Permit)  
                  Phase: Subcommittee (Swift, Sundberg, & Wagoner)  
          Presenters: Amy Candiotti, Pistil Books and News  
                          Joyce Miceli, Seattle City Light  
                          Sean Carlson, Pistil Books and News  
                  Time: .5 hr. (hourly)

While City Light is doing street work on the block, Pistil Books and News would like to embed mosaic designs in the new concrete of the sidewalk along the 1000 block of East Pike Street, in front of the store. The mosaics would be basic flower designs made of recycled glass pieces, of various colors. The replacement status and location of a new sidewalk is still undecided.



### **Discussion:**

**Dubrow:** Who created the designs?

**Candiotti:** They are taken out of a book of 19th century design patterns, so they are not copyrighted.

**Dubrow:** Have any neighbors been consulted?

**Carlson:** Yes. We have contacted most of the business owners in the immediate vicinity and they like the idea. It is an active, friendly neighborhood with a record store, a hair salon, a Mexican restaurant, and a nearby apartment building with many resident artists. We don't foresee any objections.

**Batra:** How are the glass pieces placed in the concrete?

**Candiotti:** The pieces are assembled upside down on a piece of contact paper. Then the whole thing is placed on the wet concrete and left to cure.

**Swift:** Wow, that's ingenious.

**Walls:** Given the time frame constraints, have you contacted Don Nelson about the street-use permit?

**Candiotti:** I have tried to contact him, but he hasn't yet responded.

**Miceli:** It will probably be a month until construction due to some unforeseen soil problems.

**Dubrow:** I am usually concerned that projects of this sort serve as identity markers or advertisements for a specific business. However, this project seems like a nice gesture to the neighborhood that is not specifically tied to a specific organization or business.

**Sundberg:** I am also concerned about protecting the public right-of-way and preventing businesses from expanding into the public zone. I like the object-in-a-field nature of this design. I wonder how well the pieces will stay embedded over time.

**Swift:** These designs will become parts of the walk for many years despite changing building owners and tenants. I assume the locations will be decided by the sidewalk construction.

**Walls:** Are you unsure about the location at this point?

**Carlson:** Yes, we just need wet concrete. We are happy to put them in anywhere on the block. It may also be beneficial to have the new sidewalk put in without the standard two foot grid.

**Action:** **The Commission recommends approval of the project and supports the found-object nature of the design. The Commission offers to assist in the facilitation of the process whenever possible.**

The Commission discussed Work Plan options and possible areas of interest for 1998.

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021998.4      Project: **SDC Re-Appointments**  
                     Time: .25 hr. (N/C)

Commissioners Dubrow, Foley, Sundberg, and Swift took the Oath of Office with Judith Pippin, City Clerk.

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021998.5      Project: **Sign Ordinance**  
                     Phase: Briefing  
                     Presenters: Diane Althaus, Department of Construction & Land Use  
                     Time: .75 hr. (N/C)

Diane Althaus gave the Commission a briefing on a new sign ordinance for the downtown zones. At the request of Councilmember Drago, DCLU has prepared an amendment for the sign ordinance regarding the 65 foot height limit. The amended ordinance would extend a special exception process, already used in commercial zones, to include downtown zones. The amended ordinance states that the Director may authorize exceptions to the regulations for the size, number, type, height, and depth of projection of on-premises signs within the Downtown Office Core, Downtown Retail Core, Downtown Mixed Commercial, and Downtown Harborfront zones pursuant to the procedures for Master Use Permits and Council Land Use Decisions. When one or more of the following conditions has been met, a set of characteristics shall be used to evaluate the merits of the proposal. Proposals must also meet the intent of the Sign Code and no exceptions shall be granted for roof signs or other signs already prohibited. The Director shall consult with the Seattle Design Commission before issuance of the special exception decision.

*Conditions* to be met (one or more of the following)

1. The proposed sign plan shows an exceptional effort toward creating visual harmony among signs, desirable streetscape features, building facade and other architectural elements of the building structure through the use of a consistent design theme;
2. The proposed sign plan will preserve a desirable existing design or siting pattern for signs in an area;
3. The proposed sign plan will reduce views of historic landmarks designated by the Landmarks Preservation Board no more than would be permitted by a sign allowed without this exception.

*Characteristics* for the evaluation of an exception request

The proposed sign:

- unifies the project as a whole or contributes positively to a comprehensive building and tenant signage plan;
- is compatible with the building facade and scale of building in terms of size, height, and location;
- adds interest to the street level environment, while also identifying upper level businesses;
- helps orient pedestrians and motorists at street-level in the vicinity of the subject building;
- integrates support fixtures, conduits, wiring, switches, and other mounting apparatus into the building architecture to the extent feasible.

### **Discussion:**

**Swift:** There will be a broad range of issues to consider when reviewing projects that request a sign ordinance exception. It may be helpful to have a list of issues important to DCLU as well as the criteria listed in the ordinance.

**Sundberg:** Why was the Westin Hotel allowed to have a sign above 65 feet?

- Althaus:** That sign ordinance had a special exception for hotels.
- Foley:** I am trying to understand the intentions of a unified sign system. What if a single tenant wants a sign? It is an interesting and difficult problem because the buildings are permanent and the signs relate to the tenants.
- Dubrow:** The unified plan requires a unifying character, not unified signage.
- Wagoner:** The ordinance is intended to set up a review process to evaluate whether or not a sign is appropriate.
- Dubrow:** It might be helpful if we had a booklet or brochure with visual examples of integrated support fixtures, alternative sign examples, etc. It may help applicants as well to have a visual reference of acceptable signage.
- Foley:** I am concerned about additional signage on a building's exterior as apposed to interior directories. A building's elevation greatly defines the visual framework of the public realm.
- Wagoner:** Signage issues are worth considering on a project by project basis.
- Althaus:** This ordinance will probably not result in many requested exceptions to review. There have been only two in the Commercial zones for the last ten years.
- Darwish:** Are signs allowed to be used for advertisement purposes as well as identification?
- Althaus:** The signs are for the identification of businesses.
- Foley:** I am fearful of this issue being opened up to interpretation, and the possible negative resulting. Key Arena's sign is an example of this. It seems to be a sort of Pandora's Box. I wonder what the result will be in 200 years. It seems that the intent of the ordinance is the proliferation of signage.
- Althaus:** The intent is non-proliferation of signage through the evaluation process.
- Dubrow:** Is there a booklet summary of the sign code for applicants to reference?
- Wagoner:** No, there is only a compilation of the sign code.
- Dubrow:** I suggest that we develop a good visual booklet on the sign code with examples and recommendations.
- Swift:** I am reminded of the flags designed for the entry to the SODO center that have strong Starbuck's imagery.
- Althaus:** I realize that most signs have logos within them that could make them look like advertisements. There is also a 120 day time limit to consideration by the director.
- Action:** **The Commission appreciates the briefing. Since the Commission will be asked to review code exceptions according to the new sign ordinance, a comprehensive guideline would be helpful in evaluating applications.**
- Note:** **The Commission recommends the development of comprehensive downtown signage guidelines, supporting the new sign ordinance criteria, to help the Commission and City staff in evaluating exception applications.**

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021998.6      Project: **Commission Business**

**Action Items**

- A. MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 5<sup>TH</sup> MEETING: Approved as amended.

**Discussion Items**

- B. 1925 FIFTH AVENUE STREET USE PERMIT REQUEST: Plans review.
- C. GROWING VINE STREET: City Council meeting February 11<sup>th</sup>, and a Brown Bag meeting February 12<sup>th</sup>.
- D. KING STREET AREA IMPROVEMENTS: Foley reported.
- E. FOOTBALL NORTHWEST DEIS: Review assignments. Comments to be returned to Rebecca by Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- F. MUNICIPAL CENTER MASTER PLAN: Wagoner reported
- G. CENTER FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE: Wagoner reported, Commission discussion.
- H. RTA UPDATE: Currently involved in urban planning around the station areas.
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021998.7      Project: **Mercer Complex** (Seattle Center)

Phase: Conceptual Briefing

Presenters: Dave Buchan, Seattle Center  
Sherrill Myers, LMN Architects  
Mark Reddington, LMN Architects

Attendees: Jeff Benesi, Hewitt Isley  
Lee Copeland, Weinstein Copeland

Time: .75 hr. (hourly)

The Mercer Complex project consists of renovations to the Opera House, the Mercer Arena, and the Central Plant. A feasibility study has recently been completed for the project. The primary focus of the feasibility study was on the Opera House, which is outdated, crowded, and worn out. The Seattle Center would like to provide a world-class facility worthy of the quality of productions currently put on.

The Opera House structure has gone through two generations of construction, neither of which meet current seismic requirements. Significant portions of the original building can still be salvaged. The auditorium currently has good opera acoustics, with a few weak places, but the orchestra pit has significant problems. The stage platform is small and therefore limits the size of productions. The proposed lobby space will act as a filter between the central campus and the northern community. It will have a grand staircase centered on axis with the auditorium.

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|--------------|--|
| Lower level: | support functions for the Center<br>new rehearsal spaces   |
| Stage level: | new dressing rooms<br>a larger stage platform<br>vertical atrium connecting upper floors backstage |
| Lobby level: | main entry space with grand stair<br>donor rooms facing the International Fountain                 |



**Discussion:**

- Darwish:** Will there be a drop-off lane on Mercer Street?
- Reddington:** We have discussed that idea extensively. It will also be covered in more detail in the Mercer Theater District Master Plan presentation.
- Sundberg:** Although I miss the old theater building hidden within, the new design is friendlier to Mercer Street and pedestrian traffic. It is also an interesting idea to develop the Mercer arena, now a blank facade.
- Swift:** What is happening with the existing poplar trees?
- Reddington:** Our idea is to create a Mercer Street side that has a streetscape feel while the Seattle Center side remains a park-like feel. We hope to retain as many trees as possible.
- Swift:** I am curious about the roof configuration. What is the peaked roof in the center?
- Reddington:** That is the existing gable roof. The roof over the lobby space is an attempt to open up the functions below to the exterior with a simple roof form.
- Swift:** The notion of creating an east/west connection is admirable. The building is approached as if it was an entry to the Seattle Center. There are two sets of issues to deal with in this scheme. Solving the specific Opera House problems will be easier than the urban problems.
- Reddington:** We looked at making the lobby more open to the outside, but it isn't feasible and has to be enclosed.
- Hansmire:** Can you keep portions of the exterior walls of the 1923 building?
- Reddington:** No, they don't have the necessary structural value.
- Hansmire:** How long will the Opera House be closed for construction?
- Reddington:** Approximately 12 months, or one full season. The complete schedule is being sorted out now.
- Foley:** I am impressed by the ambitious scope of recreating the Opera House. The increased amount of space given to public circulation is good. I am still a little confused about the main stair.
- Reddington:** The lobby stair is a grand, curving staircase, centered on the auditorium axis, that directs north/south circulation into the Opera House.
- Foley:** Have you anticipated the primary pedestrian approach?
- Reddington:** Most patrons will be coming from the Mercer parking garage to the north, across the pedestrian bridge and into the exterior plaza space.
- Copeland:** The pedestrian bridge allows patrons to get from their cars to the Opera House without being in the rain.
- Darwish:** What are your plans for signage, given the amount of glazing on the lobby?
- Reddington:** There has been discussion about that issue, but it has not yet been resolved.
- Swift:** Have you completed the feasibility study?
- Reddington:** Yes. Seattle Center is now deciding what to do with the information.
- Buchan:** The design is in a preliminary phase. We are still trying to decide what to do with the Central Plant. It has reached the end of its useful life. That is the first step in this project.
- Foley:** What will be done with about climate control in the Opera House?
- Reddington:** It will have a completely new system. The current system doesn't meet current code requirements. The new design will also have many additional restrooms.
- Batra:** Are the glass "bookshelf" elements functional or cosmetic?
- Reddington:** They are preliminary designs for filtering light. It is a complicated window wall.
- Foley:** Is the lobby open to through traffic to the Seattle Center?
- Reddington:** It could be depending on how the Center wanted to operate the building. It is flexible at the moment.

**Swift:** I am concerned that if the north/south connection the campus is not continually accessible, then it won't be used during special events.

**Action:** **The Commission appreciates the briefing. The Commission recommends pursuing continual access to the Center if public access for special events is desired. The Commission appreciates the efforts to make the Opera House a world-class facility.**

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021998.7      Project: **Mercer Theater District Master Plan** (Seattle Center)  
                  Phase: Conceptual Briefing  
          Presenters: Jeff Benesi, Hewitt Isley  
                  Dave Buchan, Seattle Center  
                  Lee Copeland, Weinstein Copeland Architects  
          Attendees: Sherrill Myers, LMN Architects  
                  Mark Reddington, LMN Architects  
          Time: .75 hr. (hourly)

A Master Plan has been developed for the Mercer Street corridor adjacent to Seattle Center. The intent of this plan is to reinforce the Center's Theater District by transforming it from a back door to the Seattle Center into festive and cultural environment with connections to the main campus. Since Mercer Street is one-way toward the east, the corner of Warren and Mercer becomes a major threshold for the Theater District. The design team has developed a list of recommendations including the removal of one traffic lane of Mercer Street in order to widen the sidewalk, develop a more open and accessible opera house, develop a major public space that creates a Theater district, and maintain a clear connection to the central campus.

#### **Discussion:**

**Dubrow:** I like the strength of this side of the Center and the Mercer Corridor. I wonder about the expansion across Mercer and if the Center might be better served by concentrating efforts on the edge condition, keeping activity close to the building. I question the creation of a drop-off lane by removing one lane of traffic. It seems that low-occupancy-vehicles are getting more service.

**Buchan:** There is already a drop-off lane on the south side of Mercer Street. We are essentially widening the sidewalk by one lane, moving the existing drop-off lane out. It is intended to create a better pedestrian promenade.

**Swift:** There is validity in trying to clarify the Center's northern edge. To create a sense of a theater district you have to have a container to contain the activity. How you break down the edges of the container then become important. I therefore wonder about the small park across Mercer to the north. The process, or performance, of going to the opera is extremely important. This process usually begins at home while you are getting ready. Perhaps the dollars spent on the small park are better spent on further developing the experience and procession from the parking garage, or bus, to the theater. Memory of the event is also an important part of the experience.

**Copeland:** We are greatly interested in those issues. Most people do park in the Mercer garage.

**Swift:** The existing stairwells in the garage are awful and are antithetical to the performance experience.

**Dubrow:** Perhaps the drop-off lane occurs on the north side of Mercer Street, celebrating the crossing of Mercer as a part of the procession. Then you could take the space from the garage rather than the traffic lane.

- Swift:** I appreciate the comment that this project will not have humble presence. I think the strength is in the big moves, avoiding small trinkets, and cluttering elements.
- Darwish:** I think that drop-offs will occur at the south side of Mercer Street whether a lane is provided or not.
- Foley:** I see value in having the drop-off at the south side of Mercer Street. It acts as a buffer between traffic and pedestrians. Is there opportunity for any cafes, restaurants, or other venues within or around the lobby space?
- Buchan:** It is an option. The problem is a rather sporadic demand limited to events.
- Reddington:** The patio space above the new mechanical rooms is intended to have some sort of vending operation during events within the district.
- Sundberg:** What is the meaning of the small park north of the Center
- Copeland:** It was included on the assumption that other Seattle Center development would occur around it, filling the block.
- Sundberg:** There are procession opportunities for the entire length of the street through the use of trees, and lighting. It does seem to have a missing piece that connects the large scale building elements to the small scale streetscape elements. A medium scale seems to be missing.
- Copeland:** It may be a question of a new colonnade scaled to tie them together.
- Buchan:** Each entity can have its own marquee along that edge, which might begin to develop that missing link.
- Sundberg:** It requires some kind of unifying core.
- Hansmire:** The bridge seems to form a threshold between the central space and the arena streetscape. I wonder if the two spaces can be more integrated. The experience breaks down to just a wide sidewalk at the pedestrian bridge.
- Copeland:** I think it is possible, but will greatly depend on the program in the arena.
- Dubrow:** Conceptually there will be more openings in the arena facade.
- Reddington:** There will be a number of openings, but mostly to backstage spaces.
- Hansmire:** If the bridge is a strong enough element, it could form the end of the central space.
- Foley:** Are plans for the arena developed yet?
- Buchan:** They are being developed now. We should have proposals next month. The arena renovation is not currently funded.
- Swift:** Are there guiding principles in place while the arena project awaits funding?
- Buchan:** Those are in place.
- Batra:** I realize that a world-class facility requires a drop-off lane, since people are dressed-up for the evening. Its location requires people to cross three lanes of traffic, make a left turn, and enter the garage.
- Reddington:** Most people using the garage don't use the drop-off lane. It is primarily used by patrons arriving in taxis or shuttle vans.
- Action:** **The Commission appreciates the briefing, is enthusiastic about the development of the Theater District, and suggests that the design team**
- **continue to develop bold ideas;**
  - **continue to develop the notion of procession to and through the pedestrian zones;**
  - **continue to develop the Theater District as a strong north edge to Seattle Center.**

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021998.8      Project: **Hotel Proposal** (Seattle Center)  
                  Phase: Briefing  
                  Presenters: David Bateman, NWWMG

Dave Buchan, Seattle Center  
 Charles Shugart, Tecnikos  
 Coy Wood, N.W. Hotel Management

Time: .75 hr. (hourly)

The Seattle Center has long thought that a hotel would make a valuable addition to the campus. Given the destination character of the Seattle Center, a hotel could enhance visitor's experience. Eight years ago the Mercer Arena site was looked at as a possible hotel location. Nearby hotels are thriving due to a changing demographic in the area and an increased demand. Recently the Seattle Center has considered the existing parking lot at the corner of Second Avenue and John Street as a hotel location. It is already City owned property with good views of Elliott Bay. The parking revenues would be maintained through a parking level below the hotel that is owned and controlled by Seattle Center.

The building will be a Hilton Gardens Hotel franchise owned independently. The design is also being done independently by a local design firm. The Hilton namesake comes with a few requirements; room size and furnishings, a glazed entry element, and a double loaded corridor layout. The building has a footprint of about 22,000 square feet with a single main entrance off of Second Avenue. The building will be approximately 50 feet high. The exterior materials will be brick for the first two floors, then dryvit, and a metal hip roof. The existing street trees will remain.

#### **Discussion:**

- Dubrow:** What will be the cost of the suites? How does this project differ, in terms of incurred costs, from a development done on private property?
- Bateman:** The suites will range in price from \$100 to \$130. The ground lease plays an important role in keeping the cost of the rooms down. Having an adequate site in a good location is an important issue.
- Batra:** What is the economic benefit to the City in granting the ground lease? It seems like Seattle Center gets a high percentage of the profits.
- Dubrow:** Is it a win/win for the City or for the Seattle Center?
- Buchan:** The value to the City is more than just economic return on the property. The construction of a hotel near the Seattle Center campus provides visitors with a variety of options; from taking the monorail downtown to seeing a sporting event at Key Arena, or a play at the Mercer Complex. It becomes part of an ongoing dialogue between the City and the Seattle Center.
- Bateman:** The City will gain 30 new spaces and a covered parking garage, without any net loss.
- Shugart:** The Seattle Center will get revenues from parking and from the ground lease, while the City will get revenues from taxes on the hotel development.
- Dubrow:** The nature of the public benefit in proportion to the public expense will be a constant problem with this project.
- Buchan:** Yes it will.
- Foley:** What is the term of the ground lease and what will happen when the lease is up?
- Buchan:** It will probably be a 50 year lease with a 10 year option, but is still an open question that is not yet totally resolved.
- Swift:** Was there discussion of a hotel development in the Master Planning effort?
- Buchan:** Yes, it was done for the Mercer Arena site in the Master Plan. The arrangement is similar to the ground lease for the Experience Music Project, which helps to support the Seattle Center while adding another dimension to Seattle's visitor services.

- Dubrow:** The project seems to address visitors more than resident citizens. What is the benefit to citizens of Seattle?
- Buchan:** Many regional citizens spend leisure weekends downtown. People often come downtown, stay in a hotel for a night, catch a Sonics game or a ballet, go to dinner, etc. like a mini-vacation.
- Darwish:** Will parking rates increase?
- Buchan:** That is still a major discussion topic. We intend to leave existing rates in place on the City parking spaces. The hotel parking rates will be similar but will be included in the cost of rooms. There is no intent to raise the existing rates.
- Shugart:** The City will be in control of its parking fees, not the hotel.
- Swift:** I am profoundly disturbed that this would be considered an appropriate use of public land. The arguments that you have made, while they are comprehensive and thorough, just can't get me off that point. I urge very strongly against continued pursuit of this idea. This is an inappropriate use of public land. In terms of the hotel itself I also have some concerns. A major corporation has a body of design standards tied to operational issues that result in forms that are not as responsive as they need to be to the site and the adjacent community.
- Shugart:** The arrangement with Hilton is a namesake arrangement. The only requirements on the design are room sizes and an entry pavilion. We have complete flexibility in the building's form and intend to provide a quality structure with materials and scaling elements conducive to its context.
- Dubrow:** I believe you have intentions to develop quality design. I still have serious concerns that this is an inappropriate use of public land. This project should be pursued on private property. I think that the good intentions are headed in a wrong direction.
- Foley:** What was proposed for the site in the Master Plan?
- Buchan:** A two level parking structure was proposed.
- Hansmire:** I have less of a problem with the hotel using the site for private development if it was intended to be a parking lot in the Master Plan. I am more concerned about the building's fit into the urban context around it. I think the building should be related to the neighborhood. The Queen Apartment character would fit well. The City has gotten into undesirable situations in the past with similar public/private partnerships.
- Batra:** 60 dollars per square foot seems pretty low to me, given that the development gains more than Seattle Center. I am not convinced that Seattle Center is getting a great deal for the public land.
- Foley:** I also have concerns about the appropriateness of this project on public property. If it were proposed on Seattle Center's main campus, I wouldn't even consider it an option.
- Wagoner:** The Master Plan did have Design Commission involvement. The hotel component idea came out of a group interest and has emerged as part of a legitimate public process.
- Dubrow:** I am having a hard time getting past the use of public lands issue. In terms of the hotel design, minimal impact is not always the rule to follow. A higher density approach may be more in keeping with the Seattle Center. This may not be the best site for a hotel. Have other sites around the Center's edge been considered?
- Buchan:** Other options have been discussed.
- Hansmire:** Have you talked with the lower Queen Anne neighborhood committee?
- Buchan:** Yes we have, and will meet with them again next week. We have received a mix of comments. Some comments have similar concerns about using public property

while others find it a great asset to the area. We are comfortable with the provisional business arrangement at this point.

**Swift:** I would be more comfortable if the development was on private property. I am concerned that in 50 years, when the lease is up, the city is left with a building that requires significant upgrades and repairs. I don't think it is a wise decision for the City. If the property was sold in this market, profits could be much higher. Given the political environment, I would be cautious.

**Dubrow:** A shorter lease that resulted in housing may be more in line with the Mayors goals of public/private development. Have you explored that option?

**Buchan:** We have explored the option of housing. It seemed to have an awkward fit.

**Action:** **The Commission appreciates the briefing, but has the following concerns:**

- **a lack of City policy establishing criteria for evaluating public/private partnerships has resulted in Commission concerns about the type of land use being proposed.**
- **this public/private partnership must result in a fair, equitable return to the City;**
- **it appears that an open public selection process has not been used in the development of this public property.**